



Umbrella Summary

Political Skill

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is political skill?

Political skill refers to “the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ahearn et al., 2004, p. 311). Unlike [organizational politics](#), which involve self-serving and detrimental behavior, political skill involves positive, sincere, and effective influence (Ferris et al., 2005). The primary measure of political skill is the 18-item Political Skill Inventory, which assesses political skill through four factors: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Example items from each factor, respectively, include “I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others,” “It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people,” “I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others,” and “When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do” (Ferris et al., 2005).

Why is political skill important?

Political skill is important because it is associated with an array of job attitudes, stress indicators, and behaviors. More specifically, political skill is moderately associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, burnout, task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and overall career success (Chen et al., 2021; Munyon et al., 2015; Summers et al., 2020). Though most of the research has not been conducive to thoroughly testing the question, there is some evidence that some of these connections are more pronounced in jobs with more social demands (Bing et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2021), which suggests greater potential utility in child welfare roles, from frontline staff through upper management.

Can political skill be developed?

Meta-analytic research on political skill thus far has focused on assessing factors that are merely associated with it, not on what strategies can improve it. Researchers believe, however, that political skill is partly dispositional and can also be developed through deliberate strategies such as mentoring, simulations, role-playing, drama-based training, [video feedback](#), [behavior modeling](#), and [coaching](#) (Ferris et al., 2002). Though the general efficacy of many of these methods have been established, research is needed to test the effectiveness of these recommendations for political skill in particular.

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Political skill is moderately associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, burnout, task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and overall career success.
- ▶ There is some evidence that some these connections are more pronounced in jobs with more social demands, which suggests greater potential utility in child welfare roles, from frontline staff through upper management.
- ▶ Researchers believe that political skill is partly dispositional and can also be developed through deliberate strategies such as mentoring, simulations, role-playing, drama-based training, [video feedback](#), [behavior modeling](#), and [coaching](#).
- ▶ Practitioners or researchers who would like to assess political skills should consider the 18-item Political Skill Inventory by Ferris et al. (2005).

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